

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Missouri has been involved in the Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process (CIMP) from July 2000 through October 2002. The purpose of this process in Missouri was much more than meeting an Office of Special Education Program (OSEP) federal monitoring requirement. The process allowed us to look deeply at the existing data, develop more comprehensive and efficient data collection methods, narrow our focus to student outcomes, and establish a firm baseline from which to measure our performance. We have learned a tremendous amount of information about Missouri's services to infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities, and their families – and with that information, we have learned to ask more questions. It is only with this approach of continuous improvement through data analysis, that we will learn what methods are successful, which methods are not successful, and most importantly, the reasons why.

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), Division of Special Education coordinated the CIMP process. The Division was reorganized in July 2000. This design created four functional sections that address infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities ages 0-22; Compliance, Data Coordination, Effective Practices, and Funds Management. The Division:

- Has general supervision authority for Section 619 (ECSE) and Parts B and C of IDEA
- Serves as the lead agency for Part C – Missouri First Steps Program
- Operates the due process, mediation, and child complaint systems
- Operates Missouri School for the Blind, Missouri School for the Deaf, and State Schools for Severely Handicapped
- Monitors 524 public school districts as well as charter schools
- Collects data on children and youth with disabilities ages 0-22
- Coordinates the state's Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) system for personnel serving infants, toddlers, children and youth with disabilities 0-22
- Administers and distributes state and federal funds for Special Education and Early Intervention in Missouri

The reorganization of the Division centralized all monitoring activities for Part B and Part C in the Compliance section. The staff develops monitoring standards and procedures, conducts monitoring activities, coordinates the due process hearing and mediation systems, and investigates child complaints.

Missouri now has more data than previously and reports from Missouri's monitoring system are now automated. Missouri has a monitoring system in place that includes follow-up monitoring until districts are in compliance. As a result of the change in monitoring procedures, one of the expectations is that data from the system will be available for analysis to inform and shape the type of strategies that will need to be developed to contribute to systemic change. The number of child complaints has declining in the last five years, and the percent of complaints extended beyond sixty days has been cut in half in the 2001-2002 school year.

The State had two steering committees for the CIMP. The Part B steering committee is the State Special Education Advisory Panel (SEAP). The Part C steering committee is a subcommittee of the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC). Division of Special Education personnel also served on the steering committee. Both steering committees were involved with the development and review of the Transition from Part C to Part B cluster area subcommittee and report. A complete listing of steering committee members and their affiliations can be found in the appendix.

Stakeholders involved included parents, students, school district general and special education teachers and administrators, representatives of parent and professional organizations and Part C providers. DESE staff provided information and data and some staff members facilitated cluster subcommittees. The Office of Social and Economic Data Analysis (OSED) participated in designing, collecting and analyzing the survey data and designing the focus groups. Great Lakes Area Regional Resource Center (GLARRC) staff provided technical assistance to DESE and steering and cluster area committees.

The Missouri process began in 2000 with Division staff and a Special Education Advisory Panel member attending the OSEP Self-Assessment Institute in Chicago. Following that meeting, the participants designed a process that allowed maximum stakeholder involvement, addressed both OSEP and Missouri indicators, and was data driven. For Part C, Missouri used the work of the First Steps System Redesign Task Force as a basis for data collection.

The work on the self assessment was subdivided into the following areas: General Supervision for Part B, Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE), Secondary Transition, Parent Involvement, Early Childhood Special Education, Early Childhood Transition from Part C to B, General Supervision for Part C, Comprehensive Public Awareness and Child Find System, Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments and Family-Centered Services. The Early Childhood Special Education cluster committee was designed to meet a state need and was not a cluster area recommended by OSEP. Otherwise, these areas and their corresponding components and indicators follow OSEP's recommendations. In some instances, committees modified the language for clarity for Missouri. The Self-Assessment contains data and committee conclusions on the OSEP Clusters, Components and Indicators. Stakeholders, through their work on these cluster areas, identified the following general areas of strength and concern in Missouri:

General Supervision

Missouri's special education monitoring system includes new standards and indicators that review both process compliance and student performance. A new database for child complaints, due process, and mediation will more closely tie monitoring and the child protection systems together to identify systemic issues. DESE has a collaborative and cooperative relationship with other agencies providing services. Monitoring needs to be enhanced in the areas of county jails, oversight of private agencies, and performance of students at Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) and Missouri School for the Deaf (MSD).

Parent Involvement

Parents report they participate in decisions regarding their own child and a growing number are involved in other program improvement activities. Parents are concerned that the Procedural Safeguards' statements required by OSEP are difficult to understand.

FAPE

Missouri has a strong CSPD component to address training needs of special education and related services personnel. The availability of qualified staff to provide special education and related services needs further research on a regional level to determine the prevalence and causes of shortages. The data system for collection of personnel data needs revision.

Performance data in the areas of the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP), graduation rates and dropout rates indicates steady improvement, however, a gap still exists between students with and without disabilities.

Secondary Transition

There are numerous CSPD activities in the area of transition. Data shows increases in graduation rates, post secondary training, and employment for students with disabilities. Dropout rates are also declining. Additional data analysis on a regional basis will assist in targeting specific areas of concern.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

There are still many unknowns about the early childhood programs in Missouri. Additional and better data is needed on all aspects of Early Childhood Special Education in order to better identify areas of concern.

Part C

The Part C system is in the Phase 1 process of implementation of a redesign, which includes a centralized data system and a central finance office. Monitoring of the implementation of the redesign components will occur to ensure the effectiveness of the changes.

In addition to the above findings, the following improvements were put in place during this process:

- A state level database for professional development was developed and implemented.
- Special Education State and District Data Profiles were developed and distributed to all districts.
- Monitoring standards/ indicators and a new training/credentialing system were developed and implemented for Part C.

Both steering committees stated in Lessons Learned, the value of using critical data to assist in decision making and to monitor progress as they move to the improvement planning phase.